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ABSTRACT

This issue of "Progressions" shares the lessons learned by the Lilly Endowment's Education Division from partnerships with educators, librarians, parents, and community activists. The articles look at individual components of the endowment's overall plan to promote reading among youngsters in grades five through nine, and to introduce the Middle Grades Reading Network--the next phase of the reading initiative--that is designed to build on the success of early programs. The six articles and their authors are as follows: (1) "Survival Skill. Reading: Connecting with the Real World" (Stephen Silha); (2) "Hooked on Reading: Teachers and Students Lured Back to the Books" (Beverley J. Pitts), describing three school-based projects--Student-Operated Paperback Bookshops, Teachers under Cover, and Reading for Real--which are part of the Middle Grades Reading Program; (3) "Just Add Books: Libraries Learn to Repopulate 'No Man's Land'" (Dennis E. Hensley), describing four projects promoting library use by young adolescents; (4) "Model Behavior: Parents, Communities Reinforce Reading Efforts" (Mary W. Atteberry), discussing programs to involve parents and communities in strengthening children's reading habits; (5) "The Next Step: Middle Grades Reading Network" (Jack W. Williams); and (6) "Reflections: Lessons of a Grantmaker" (Joan Lipsitz). (SR)

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...AFENTOCCASIONAL REPORT.

BUILDING COMMUNITIES OF READERS

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PROGRESSIONS

A Lilly Endowment Occasional Report

Volume 4, Issue 4 December 1992

About Lilly Endowment:

Lilly Endowment Inc. is an Indianapolis-based private charitable foundation. It was created in 1937 by three members of the Lilly family — J.K. Lilly Sr. and sons J.K. Jr. and Eli — through gifts of stock in their pharmaceutical business, Eli Lilly and Company.

Those gifts remain the financial bedrock of the Endowment today. It is, however, a separate entity from the company, with a distinct governing board, staff and location.

In keeping with the wishes of its founders, Lilly Endowment exists to support the causes of religion, education and community development. Special emphasis is afforded projects that benefit youth, promote leadership education and strengthen the charitable nonprofit sector.

About Progressions:

Progressions magazine is an occasional publication of Lilly Endowment Inc. Each issue of *Progressions* presents a popularized summary of a significant body of knowledge that the Endowment has helped to support. Individual editions of the magazine focus on a particular issue or theme related to the grantmaking interests of the Endowment.

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Publisher's note

There is more treasure in books than in all the pirate's loot on Treasure Island ... and best of all, you can enjoy these riches every day of your life.

This enthusiastic endorsement of reading came not from a writer, a librarian or an English teacher, but from the master of animated cartoons for children — Walt Disney.

As Disney affirmed, reading is the key necessary to unlock "riches every day of your life." On a pragmatic level, it also is the skill necessary to survive in today's information age. Anyone who skims the daily newspaper or tunes in the evening news is likely to encounter grim evidence of what can happen when young people lack adequate reading skills. The process is predictable: Reading failure correlates with school failure, which often leads to dropping out. Choices diminish and complications set in — unemployment, teenage pregnancy, substance abuse and street crime are all-too-common spinoffs of youth's inability to function in a data-driven society.

Lilly Endowment's interest in "keeping the options open" for young adolescents requires a concern about functional illiteracy and a special commitment to reading programs that offer hope to disadvantaged youth. As a part of our effort to improve Indiana's middle-level schools, the Endowment's Education Division decided five years ago to support programs that encourage students to polish their reading skills and, at the same time, acquire a lifelong love of books.

We were guided in our early work by a panel of reading experts who emphasized the vital role adults play in instilling reading habits in adolescents. "Students don't learn to value books in a vacuum," our advisers told us. Instead, youth are more likely to covet books if their teachers enthusiastically read and discuss literature at school and if their parents actively consume books and magazines at home.

Our mission began to take shape: We would support programs to build intergenerational communities of readers, especially in Indiana's least-advantaged school corporations. We would encourage a broad range of efforts — programs based in the school, in the public library, at home and in the community. These programs, when properly connected, would have the potential to create a reading culture.

The Endowment's middle-grades reading initiative is still unfolding, and much work remains to be done. The purpose of this issue of *Progressions* is not to evaluate past efforts, but to share the lessons we have learned from our partnerships with educators, librarians, parents and community activists. In the articles in this report we look at individual components of the overall plan to promote reading among youngsters in grades five through nine. We also introduce the Middle Grades Reading Network — the next phase of the reading initiative — that is designed to build on the successes of early programs.

As we pause and review our work thus far, we thank Dr. Jack Humphrey, who has guided us from idea to implementation and who continues to advise us as director of the Middle Grades Reading Network. Our thanks also go to a talented team of independent writers — Stephen Silha, Beverley J. Pitts, Dennis E. Hensley, Mary W. Atteberry and Jack W. Williams — who not only conducted interviews and studied research findings, but also visited classrooms, browsed through student-operated bookshops, attended workshops and scanned library stacks across Indiana. The report they brought back is encouraging: The "treasure in books" is not buried but is being discovered and rediscovered daily.

William C. Bonifield
Vice President, Education

On the cover

Who says basketball is everything in Indiana? *Andre Majors is transported from the gym at South Side Middle School, Anderson, Ind., to Nazi-occupied Holland as he reads* Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl.

SURVIVAL SKILL

Reading: Connecting with the real world

The days of Abraham Lincoln and George Washington Carver — both of whom avidly read books to learn — are over. The average American reads for 24 minutes a day, down 25 percent from 1965. The average fifth-grader reads 4.6 minutes a day (outside of school) — down more than 25 percent from 1965. Many parents don't read newspapers, so why would children? What motivates young people to read?

by Stephen Silha

Reading is not like breathing. People do not learn it automatically. Some consider it a lifelong task.

"Reading habits develop over a long period, not just in elementary school when reading is first taught," explains Jack McGovern, professor of reading and writing at Cabrini College in Pennsylvania. And while the number of literate children — those who know how to read and write — is going up in the U.S., the number who use those skills well is going down.

Will American children be able to compete in an information-based global economy?

Economists, business leaders and astute observers wonder whether American children will be able to compete in an information-based global economy. It's not that reading has been ignored — just that it's taken a back seat in many lives:

Say you're 11. You're growing up in a rural area of Indiana. Your parents watch TV every day, but not together. Your dad works nights, so you don't see him much during the school year. You learned how to read in school, and you liked those fun books the librarian read to you, but the books in your school library are so old and boring you don't want to open them. You've learned to get by in school by listening carefully and repeating what the teacher says. But what you really like are video games. You and your friends play them and watch TV a lot, when you're not messing around outside. Sometimes your mom rents you a video so you can watch it while you take care of your younger brother. You rarely see anyone reading a magazine, much less a book.

To become mature readers, *students need access to a variety of fiction and nonfiction books, as well as time during the school day to practice their reading.*

What are the chances that you'll be turned on to reading? That you'll read great literature? Why bother to read when so much information is on video?

Reading the fine print

The age of electronic communication may be here, but it doesn't mean we don't have to read. If anything, today's citizens are asked to read more: from computer screens, to fax messages, to specialized magazines. Then there's the fine print in those Internal Revenue Service forms, insurance policies and job applications. Information abounds.

What's more, reading is a basic building block underlying the survival skills of today's information-based economy: absorbing information, analyzing, organizing, interpreting, communicating, understanding, learning.

"Each of us needs to continually evaluate and improve our reading skills," says Marge Keltner, president of the 12,000-member Indiana State Reading Association. But, Keltner emphasizes, reading is given low priority in too many homes and schools; consequently, young adolescents in Indiana — not unlike those in the rest of the country — aren't

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much interested in reading.

Many young adults have slipped into what experts call "aliteracy" — they can read, but they don't. Even booksellers speculate that many books that are purchased go unread. But isn't CNN World News an adequate replacement for reading? Isn't information enough? No, say experts, because nonstop news doesn't allow for reflection, for study, for learning what it means to be human.

Below-average readers are twice as likely to drop out of school as are average readers.

"We have lazy choices," says McGovern. "It's a little like smoking; we know it's deadly, but we keep on doing it. But it's not that hard to change our habits when we wake up."

Keltner agrees. "We read newspapers in a different way from books or IRS forms," she says. A 1985 report on reading, *Becoming a Nation of Readers*, concludes: "Reading is a process in which information from the text and the knowledge possessed by the reader act together to produce meaning. Good readers skillfully integrate information in the text with what they already know."

Books, says McGovern, "force you to reconsider how you make sense of the world." He has used poetry and literature to teach inner-city teens to read. "They'll eagerly read something that helps them make meaning of their lives," he insists.

Seven of 10 books on school library shelves are out of date.

Reading is a base-line barometer for success in life. While 94 percent of all 9-year-olds in the U.S. have rudimentary reading skills, 40 percent of the 13-year-olds have not acquired the more-advanced reading skills needed to succeed in the middle grades. Those skills include reading for specific information, drawing generalizations from a text, and making connections between their own ideas and what they've read. They have difficulty answering questions such as: "What choices did this character make?" "How did they affect her life?" "What similar choices might you face?"

Somehow, reading doesn't connect with the real world for many youngsters. Students with below-average reading scores are twice as likely to drop out of school as those whose reading levels are normal or above average. Illiteracy is frequently a common thread in the web of problems facing adolescents: unemployment, crime, teenage pregnancy, and substance abuse.

How did reading fall through the cracks for so many American youth? How could Indiana's primary-school students score well on reading tests, while teenagers' verbal scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) are in the bottom 10 in the country?

A shift in emphasis

For one thing, educators concentrate on reading in the early elementary grades. Afterward, they assume children know how to read. But the kind of reading required by middle-grades students — reading from textbooks, reading silently, writing something based on the reading — is different from the kind of enjoyable Dr. Seuss-style reading of the primary grades.

In addition, middle, junior- and senior-high schools place priority on more "grown-up" amenities than books. Reading consultant Jack W. Humphrey surveyed 460 of Indiana's 615 middle, junior- and senior-high schools and personally visited a number of the schools. Teachers and principals pointed proudly to athletic facilities, computer labs and band rooms, but few said much about libraries (now called "media centers") or reading scores.

Humphrey, who heads Indiana's Middle Grades Reading Network — funded at the University of Evansville by Lilly Endowment — was surprised at the neglected book collections in media centers. "Schools jump to buy the new technology, but they let their library collections slide," he notes. "New book acquisitions are only about one-fourth the recommended number to keep collections current." Seven of 10 books on the shelves are out of date, his survey shows; it will take at least 10 years to get libraries current.

He found other evidence that reading is neglected:

- Only 28.5 percent of surveyed schools rate reading as a high priority.
- Teachers spend fewer than four hours per year learning to teach reading and to encourage students to read.
- While most schools employ full-time library media specialists, many spend disproportionate time supervising study halls rather than encouraging reading and improving collections.
- One in five middle-grades students was not enrolled in a literature or reading class in 1991.
- Very little time is allotted to reading during the school day.
- An estimated 60 percent of the students in grades 7-12 who need special help in reading do not receive it.
- Few students use public libraries, and most schools don't have cooperative programs with libraries.
- 75 percent of Indiana schools do not have programs to encourage teachers to read and discuss books among themselves; 80 percent do nothing to help parents encourage their children to read.

Research and experience show that it *is* possible to engage middle-grades students in reading. A national survey by the Project on Adolescent Literacy at the Center for Early Adolescence in North Carolina found that the most successful programs had teachers and administrators who believed in "each young person's right and ability to read," emphasized the importance of literacy, and devoted substantial time to actual reading and writing.

Modeling reading habits

But students must play a part in selecting reading material. To help them, teachers must be familiar with available literature. If teachers read, talk about books, and believe students can read, too, a reading ripple effect will be created in the school and community.

Most reading experts agree that parents' role is the most important. Parents don't usually need to *teach* kids to read, only to *model* the importance of reading. Their behavior can better underscore how reading makes a difference in quality of life. They can read books and periodicals and talk with their children about them. They can encourage summer reading. They can make regu-

"Curling up with a good book" *can happen anywhere — just ask this student at Arsenal Technical School at Indianapolis. The competition for adolescents' time is fierce. Statistics indicate that eighth-graders spend more than 20 hours a week viewing television but only a fraction of that amount of time reading away from the classroom.*

lar trips to the library to show kids how to get more information about their special interests.

Humphrey and the Reading Network, with Endowment support, are engaged in a broad-based effort to turn around Indiana's conditions. Their first target: changing people's attitudes about reading. "Early adolescence is when you make lifetime decisions about reading," says Humphrey. "It's important to let people know that reading is bigger than textbooks." Middle-grades teachers — most of whom do not think of themselves as reading teachers — need motivation and encouragement, he says.

"Too many of us in education have accepted the remediation model and haven't demanded enough of ourselves or the kids," observes McGovern, who also consults for the Reading Network's program. He points to what researcher John Goodlad calls "emotional neutrality" in the schools as a root of the problem. "We need to treat kids with more respect — to let them read the poetry of their own and other cultures, to get them writing their own poetry," he suggests.

Communities of readers

Many techniques are working to improve reading skills across the country. These same techniques — parent and teacher reading groups, student-operated bookshops, reading aloud, computer-assisted literature programs, storytelling, volunteer tutoring, and cooperative programs with public libraries — could be pulled together to create communities of readers. This is a goal of the Endowment's Reading Network program (see p. 17).

"I suspect that kids who don't like to read don't *picture* anything in their minds," says Helen Hollenberg, a sixth-grade teacher at Fort Wayne, Ind. She has taught for more than 30 years and is part of the Middle Grades Reading Network. "If I couldn't picture anything, I wouldn't enjoy reading, either." She says if teachers and parents did more reading aloud, it would stimulate children's imaginations the way listening to radio did for her generation. "Sometimes I'll ask students to stop reading and draw what's in their minds."

Books about roller blading or cosmetics or Magic Johnson or Madonna might interest a child who otherwise would never pick up a book. Reading empowers children, connects them with the world. But they need reasons to read. Imagine a different scenario:

You're 11, in the same rural family. Your parents joined a reading group and talk with you about the book Basketball *by Indiana University basketball coach Bob Knight. You decide to read it.*

You overhear your teacher teasing another teacher about how far along she is in Scott Turow's The Burden of Proof, *which they're both reading. Your best friend is working at a student-operated bookshop that opened in your school. The library's a more interesting place to go, now that it added a computerized game that gives you points for answering questions about books you've read. And during a field trip to the public library you learned that you can check out books through the mail just by pushing a button.*

You still love video games; your teacher helped you find books about them and suggested you design your own games. You discover that there's even a magazine about video games, and you ask your parents for a subscription for your birthday. You don't even notice, but you've started reading every day. And your life has become much richer. ■

About the author

Stephen Silha*, who lives on an island off Seattle, Wash., has covered education and youth issues for* The Christian Science Monitor *and* Children's Express.

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HOOKED ON READING

Teachers and students lured back to the books

Three school-based reading programs are nudging teachers and students back to the books. At dozens of middle-grades schools, youthful staffs are ordering, displaying, buying and selling stock for student-operated bookshops; teachers are meeting after hours for lively book discussions, and classes of adolescents are discovering how to read between the lines to find meaning and enjoyment in the printed word.

by Beverley J. Pitts

It's a busy place during the noon break. The newest paperbacks, artfully arranged on a display rack just inside the door, catch a customer's eye. Garfield smiles down from a large green poster and urges everyone to "READ." A browser moves from the Stephen King novels in the horror section to the "how to" books, while a clerk steps in to help with another sale.

Getting books in the hands of young readers is the goal of 70 school bookshops.

Although the setting has all the trappings, this isn't a mall bookstore. It's the student-managed Bucs' Bookshop located right off the main hall at South Side Middle School at Anderson, Ind. On any lunch hour, a mall store would envy its load of customers.

The bookstore is one of 70 middle-grades school bookshops developed in Indiana through the Student Managed Paperback Bookshop Project supported by Lilly Endowment. Getting books in the hands of young readers is the primary goal of the bookshops, says Loran Braught, professor of elementary education at Indiana State University, Terre Haute, and project director.

Braught says: "Students at risk for reading and school failure are often those most lacking in rich and varied experiences. They have not had chances to hear stories or select their own books to read. Often they have no idea that there are books written about the matters that are of concern to them."

***Student-operated bookshops** are a hit with teenagers at South Side Middle School, Anderson. The youthful staff of the Bucs' Bookshop recently shared their experiences with members of the International Reading Association at Orlando, Fla.*

For the past two years, Indiana middle-grades students have been able to shop for books in places like Too Bad Bears Bookshop at Madison Junior High, the Bodacious Store at Jones Middle School at Marion and the Read'em Wildcat Bookshop at Gary. Funds from the Endowment grant helped the bookstores open their doors for business.

Under new management

A key to the program, according to Braught, is that students manage the bookshops and select the books that will be sold. Julie Rosenberg, an eighth-grader who manages her school's bookshop, thinks so, too. "Reading is fun in the early grades, but after the third or fourth grade, reading for fun isn't promoted as much, so we mostly just read textbooks. Kids know how to read, but they just think it's boring. We hope choosing their own books will change that."

Karen Sipes, middle-grades English teacher and adviser to Bucs' Bookshop, agrees with the assessment. "When you buy your own book, you can say: 'This is mine!' Because students have

given up their own money, the books become special to them," she says.

Ben Lamey, who helped run the South Side store last year, says: "There's a difference between going to the library and checking out a book and getting your own book to keep. Maybe it has something to do with pride, but when you have your own book, you can read it whenever you want. It's freedom."

Lamey's favorite books are *Watership Down* and *The Odyssey*. Books selected by the students include some classics and some of the best adolescent literature such as Newbery Award-winners, but also some that would never make a classics list. Joke and puzzle books, romances, sports, and mysteries are favorites with young adolescents.

Does it matter that not everything sold in the bookstores can be called a classic? Not according to the students and teachers involved. "People should realize that it's better to read the popular stuff or read even a magazine than not to read at all," Lamey says. "Popular reading expands your hunger for reading."

Sipes says, "There will be a time when we try to move youngsters from popular books to art, but if they're reading anything at all, I think that's a plus."

Each of the bookshops is run by a student board with the help of a faculty adviser, but students

How reader-friendly is your school?

Teachers of the middle grades — five through nine — have long recognized that their students are developmentally "in the middle." Physically transforming into young adults, they are also undergoing social, emotional and intellectual changes just as profound, yet not as apparent, as the physical changes.

They're embarking on more-abstract thinking. They're developing a deeper appreciation for the subtleties of language. They're pondering their future for the first time and wondering about the meanings behind actions and words. They're feeling a need to express themselves. They're developing close, possibly lifelong, friendships and are becoming more independent from family, yet they still look to parents and other adults for guidance.

At the same time, their schools are starting to expect more of them in terms of reading and writing. They are at a critical juncture in their literacy skills — moving from basic competence toward more complex proficiencies such as interpretation and analysis. Failure to master these new skills at this time could spell a lifetime of struggle.

"It is the pivot point for lifelong learning," says Robin A.G. Pulver, director of the Youth Literacy Initiative at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Center for Early Adolescence.

Creating a school-wide atmosphere

Middle-grades schools are coming to recognize the importance of having a school-wide atmosphere that nurtures literacy without ignoring the developmental needs of the 10- to 15-year-old, says Pulver. To help them in this goal, the Center for Early Adolescence — with financial support from Lilly Endowment, the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation, Carnegie Corp. of New York, and the North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center — developed a Literacy Assessment for the Middle Grades.

Published in 1991, the assessment is the first step-by-step approach for schools to determine how successful they are in developing essential literacy skills in all students. The assessment also indicates whether schools have created an atmosphere in which youth are enthusiastic about reading and writing for pleasure and other purposes. Once a school has assessed its strengths and weaknesses, it develops a plan for further action or improvement in literary skills.

The assessment is done by a team consisting of representatives from each area of the school — administration, guidance, arts, science and so on — and one or more parents (depending upon the size of the school). Team members interview individuals from each segment of the school population, including the non-teaching staff, students and parents.

Among the questions asked administrators is how they support their staff so that teachers can weave reading and writing into class activities. They are asked if all school personnel — not just English teachers — believe their contributions to the school's literacy efforts make a difference in students' success.

Encouraging readers and writers

Teachers are asked such questions as how they encourage reluctant readers and writers who lack grade-level literacy skills to get excited about classroom activities that require reading and writing. They are also asked to explain how they connect classroom activities to their students' concerns about the larger world and how reading and writing are used as tools for making that connection.

Students are questioned about whether they turn to books and writing to answer questions about their growth, feelings, friends or family. Support staff are asked if they feel all students in the school are getting the reading and writing training they need to succeed in high school and beyond.

School literacy programs that are academically sound and responsive to the youngsters' developmental needs have four things in common, Pulver notes. First, the entire school staff shares the belief that reading and writing are important, and all teachers incorporate these skills into their classes. Progress, not just achievement, is saluted so that even the weakest readers receive encouragement.

Second, successful programs provide positive reading opportunities. They nurture the young adolescent's need to read and write for personal enjoyment, realizing that the more the student reads for pleasure the more proficient he or she will become. These schools also meet each student's other "literacy needs," such as reading and writing for self-definition, exploration and invention.

Third, schools provide access to a variety of reading materials, and classroom teachers work closely with the media specialist to make sure library resources are integrated with the curriculum. "A good school librarian is an essential part of the curriculum of the school," Pulver asserts.

And fourth, they work to ensure academic success for all students — not just higher-achieving students. They also provide services for those students who need compensatory literacy supports.

Pulver believes that a low percentage of middle-grades schools have all four criteria in place, but she sees evidence that more are moving in the right direction by developing school-wide reading programs and other opportunities for youth to read and write at school. Three Indiana schools have conducted literacy assessments, and two of these have also completed their action plans.

— *Mary W. Attebery*

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carry most of the responsibility. Setting up the Bucs' store was a joint effort by teachers and students. The music teacher found the book stackers; the principal bought a wire display rack at a rummage sale, and the students cleaned and painted the former storage room to create their store, which they named for the school's pirate mascot.

Marketing plans developed by students have included special promotions for holidays such as Valentine's Day or Halloween, student "commercials," student surveys and several special promotional contests for free books. Jones Middle School students created a video called "Adventures of Bookman" to promote reading, and South Vermillion students offered free popcorn and a soft drink for every book bought in their Cat Connection Bookstore.

A bookshop staff created a video called "Adventures of Bookman" to promote reading.

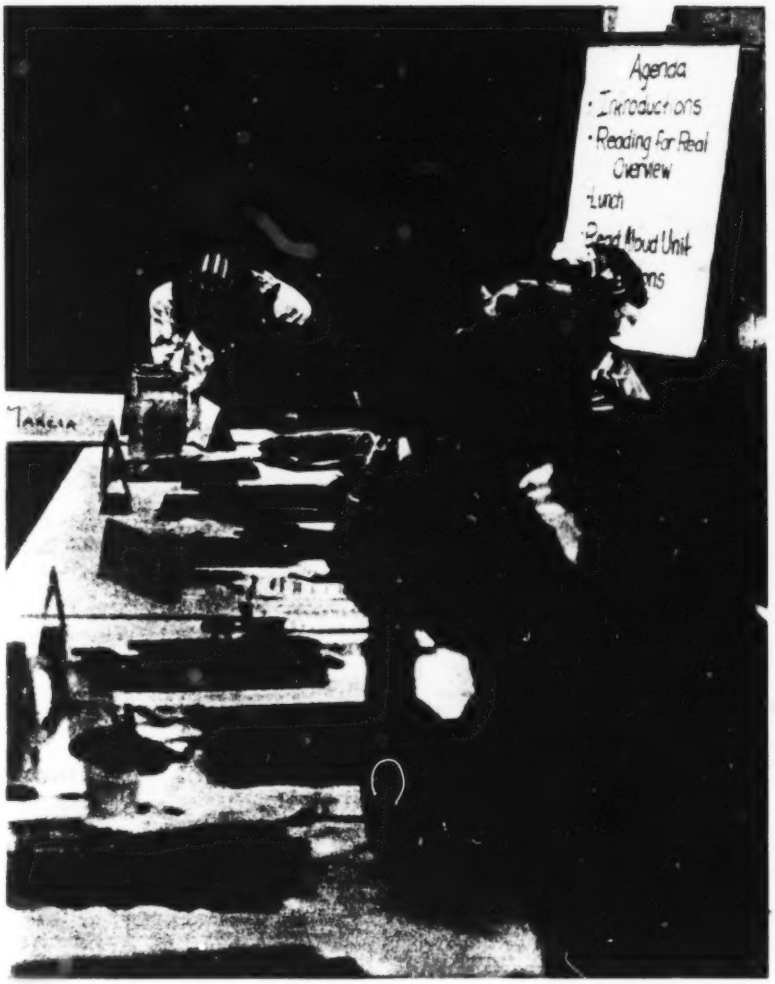
Learning the business

The management skills that students learn as they run the bookshops may be one of the most important educational benefits of the program. Students establish a budget, order the books, maintain the inventory, and set the prices. Most books sell for $1 or $2.50 — slightly less than the price at retail stores — but profit must be enough to cover operating expenses.

Students establish a budget, order the books, maintain the inventory and set the prices.

The success of the bookstores is the result of the leadership of enthusiastic teachers, according to Braught. Sipes and her colleagues at South Side Middle School are good examples of teacher support. When they became involved with the Endowment's Middle Grades Improvement Program more than five years ago, they learned that ineffective reading was one of their students' problems.

They assessed their students' reading abilities and enlisted the support of their principal to participate in a number of reading projects. These projects include the Electronic Bookshelf library program, which uses a computer program to support reading motivation and comprehension; the Read-n-Feed project, which brings students and teachers together to read and discuss young-adult literature; and the Get Excited About Reading (GEAR) campaign. Last year the GEAR reading goal for the school was 2,000 books, but the 507 seventh- and eighth-graders easily surpassed that, reading 3,395 books, many purchased at the Bucs' Bookstore. The goal this year is an ambitious 4,000 books.



A series of seminars brought teachers *together during the summer of 1992 to learn about the Reading for Real program. In addition to participating in group activities, the teachers reviewed books and materials that could be integrated into reading lessons.*

A school-bookshop manual helps schools learn to set up their bookstores. According to Braught, more shops are on the way. After learning about the project, Kathryn Myers solicited $500 from the local Rotary Club to set up a bookshop in her school, Griffith Elementary at Washington, Ind. Harrison Elementary at Gaston is starting its bookshop with the help of a $2,000 economics grant. In addition, remaining grant funds and seed money from established bookshops will be used to help establish more bookshops. Currently, 200 sites in 28 states are in the bookstore network.

Teachers Under Cover

If enjoying reading is important to improving the literacy of

students, it must be important to teachers, too. That's the philosophy of Teachers Under Cover (TUC), another Indiana reading program supported by the Endowment.

Over a two-year period, the grant helped support reading groups in 58 middle-level schools throughout the state. The reading groups included teachers from all academic disciplines. They selected the books they would read, and they got together regularly to discuss them.

A small group of Gary teachers read almost 90 books in a two-year period.

Meetings were meant to be fun. Last year, the nine-member reading group from Kennedy-King Middle School at Gary met for dinner at the Beach Cafe, along the Lake Michigan shore. After dinner, the teachers sat around a table by the fireplace to discuss the book they were reading. "We would talk about the characters and relate their lives to ours and to the world we live in. Sometimes we would get off into other discussions because of what we had read, and it was just wonderful," says English teacher Gloria Smith.

The Gary group, which included math, science and language-arts teachers, read nearly 90 books over a two-year period. Titles ranged from *Breaking Barriers* by journalist Carl Rowan to *Presumed Innocent* by attorney Scott Turow.

"After I finished **Jurassic Park**, *there was a mad dash to the library to see who would get a copy first."*

Rowan's book had a profound influence on the group, according to Smith. They had long discussions about racism and about the obstacles an African-American person of Rowan's stature had to overcome to achieve his life's goals.

The McCulloch Middle School TUC group at Marion used *Why America Doesn't Work* to discuss such questions as whether schools should attempt to teach values. For their discussion of *Indigo Place*, the Chauncey Rose Junior High teachers at Terre Haute "cast" a movie version of their book and talked about who would be best suited to play each of its main characters.

The Teachers Under Cover monthly newsletter, produced by Aldo Cardarelli, project director, let the teachers know what books groups were reading and what was happening in group discussions around the state.

Cardarelli, chairman of the teacher education department at the University of Southern Indiana, says that research indicates teachers don't spend much time reading. "We hoped that, by getting teachers back into reading and building camaraderie, they would truly be better, more-effective teachers and take that love of reading and that renewed interest into the classroom."

That is what Smith says happened to her. "I love to talk about reading with my students and tell them about the books I read. I like to say to them that I didn't enjoy one particular book and then just pick up one and say, 'Now this book, I love.'"

Dick Ramey, librarian at Attica Junior-Senior High, Attica, Ind., says that the impact of TUC was dramatic at his school. The number of students using the library increased 22 percent during the year; the number of books checked out increased by 30 percent.

Other teachers had the same experiences. In her evaluation of the TUC program, one teacher said: "As I would bring my latest book to class from time to time, I found some of my students asking what the story was about and how I liked it. After I finished *Jurassic Park*, there was a mad dash to the library to see who would get a copy first. Students wanted to talk about it with me, and they wanted to know what I thought about it."

Reading for Real

Student bookstores and teacher reading groups have increased the amount of reading and the enjoyment of reading for students and teachers in the past two years. Another project, Reading for Real, is providing the classroom techniques and lesson materials to increase students' learning from the literature that they read.

Imagine this ...

Imagine yourself a seventh-grader in a class using the Reading for Real program. What might be going on in your classroom? If you were reading *The Goats* by Brock Cole, it might be like this:

First, you would listen to your teacher read to you about Laura and Howie, the 13-year-olds left alone on an island as victims of a practical joke at summer camp. Then, you might read to your partner the part of the story that tells how they escape from the island and spend several days as "fugitives" building friendship and self-confidence.

You and your partner would talk about the most important decisions Howie and Laura had to make, and you might even present a dramatic reading of the telephone conversation between Laura and her mother.

As part of the class discussion, you might talk about whether it was right for Howie and Laura to take things that didn't belong to them and what might have been the consequences of their choices.

You and your classmates might conduct an opinion survey with members of your family or community about whether they think that Howie's and Laura's actions were justified or not.

To work on your language development, you and your partner would look in the book for clues to many new words such as *scuttle*, or *retreat*, or *careen*. You would be using your language skills to write as well as read. For instance, you might write a thank-you note for Laura and Howie to all the people who helped them during their flight from the camp.

In all your class activities, you would be learning to enjoy the story and also to think about how parts of it resemble your 13-year-old life — things such as how boys and girls can be friends, how it is painful to be labeled an outcast, and how people can be resourceful when they have to be.

And maybe what you would like best is that you wouldn't have to worry about a letter grade, although you and your teacher would keep track of your progress. Your teacher would be reporting to you and your parents about how you're doing, but you would just be enjoying what you were learning.

— *Beverley J. Pitts*

The Reading for Real program was developed by Lynn Murphy and her colleagues at the Developmental Studies Center in California with the support of a grant from the Endowment and from the Flora and William Hewlett Foundation at Menlo Park, Calif. Murphy says that the program is designed to help teachers structure a classroom community that allows students to develop excitement about reading, to think critically about important ideas, and to increase their understanding of themselves, their classmates and their communities.

"There was a hunger in Indiana; things just weren't working with middle-grades kids."

The program was piloted in five schools in Indiana in 1991. During the summer of 1992, 130 middle-grades teachers from Indiana attended a four-day workshop at Butler University at Indianapolis to learn how to implement Reading for Real in their classrooms by using curriculum materials developed to teach high-quality adolescent literature in grades four through eight.

Indiana is one of the first states to develop a middle-grades-level reading program using Reading for Real. Interest in the program was so strong that nearly 300 teachers applied to participate in the workshops, according to Martha Zetzl, assistant dean in the College of Education at Butler University and director of the workshops.

Students learn how to make decisions and how to weigh the consequences of those decisions.

Teachers' frustration with students' lack of interest in traditional reading textbooks is partially responsible for the project's popularity. "There was a hunger in Indiana," Zetzl says. "Things just weren't working with middle-grades kids."

Deborah Rudisil, fifth-grade teacher at Sharon Elementary School in Warrick County, echoes the frustration of her colleagues. "The basal reader just didn't cut it," she emphasizes. "I trashed it last year and gave the students a choice of books. I've never seen a class read like those students did." This year, Rudisil will be using the Reading for Real books in her class.

An important difference in the Reading for Real program and the traditional approach to teaching reading, according to Murphy, is that Reading for Real literature isn't taught just as a means to learn how various stories are constructed. The literature is also used as a vehicle to teach those critical thinking skills and social values that students need to learn.

Choice is a big part of the program. Lessons are built around the best in literature for young adolescents, and teachers can select from 90 units developed for various grade levels. Included in the program are books such as *A Gathering of Days*, a journal of a 14-year-old youth growing up in rural New Hampshire in the early 1800s; *The Goats*, the story of two 13-year-olds left to fend for themselves on an island; *Tuck Everlasting*, a fantasy about a magic spring that gives eternal life; and *The Hundred Dresses*, a story that explores gender roles and immigration problems in 1944 (see sidebar, p. 7).

Learning to ask "why"

The Reading for Real classroom is strongly student centered, according to Maryann Gatheral, one of the developers of the teaching materials and a workshop leader. Gatheral taught children's-literature reading to graduate-education students at the University of California for 25 years. "Really what happens is that the teacher becomes kind of the Jiminy Cricket for the students, asking the questions that we would hope they would ask themselves," says Gatheral. "That's why the program is called Reading for Real. A real reader poses these questions."

In the classroom, the teacher spends part of the time reading to the students. According to Murphy, when teachers read to students, even the poorest young reader can concentrate on the meaning of the story. "There are thoughtful ways to be a reader, even if you are a listener and not the actual decoder. The teacher who reads to students models what it means to engage thoughtfully with a book."

Another aspect of the program is partner reading, in which students read to each other. Murphy says partner reading promotes social and cognitive development. "We know that it helps us learn if we can talk about something and compare ideas with at least one other person."

Journal writing, group discussion, storytelling and poetry writing help students explore the issues raised in the books they read. The real impact of the program is in teaching students how to make decisions and how to weigh the consequences of those decisions. Letter grades are not a part of the program, so they do not become the reward for reading. Instead, teachers monitor the development of critical thinking and judgment skills with students themselves, Gatheral says.

The Reading for Real program is supported by the Indiana Department of Education. According to Linda Cornwell, learning resource consultant with the department, the program provides teachers with an excellent curriculum for teaching literature and reading. Cornwell is part of the Indiana team that will continue the teacher training next year.

Reducing risk of failure

The three school-based projects funded by the Endowment — Student-Operated Bookshops, Teachers Under Cover and Reading for Real — are part of the Middle Grades Reading Program that targets Indiana students who are at highest risk of failure. The programs provide the support that teachers need to expose these young people to the joys and benefits of reading.

Gloria Smith, who teaches middle-school language arts, says: "We teach reading, and we teach children that reading opens up the world to them, but this is the first time anyone has offered us an opportunity to show them that world. These programs open the door." ■

About the author

Beverley J. Pitts *is assistant provost and executive director of research and undergraduate curriculum at Ball State University, Muncie, Ind.*

JUST ADD BOOKS

Libraries learn to repopulate "no man's land"

Challenge: How do you turn young adolescents into avid readers? Strategies encouraged by Lilly Endowment include creating reading-for-fun advocates in schools, homes and public libraries; providing books to small rural libraries; promoting training and collaborative programs for school and public librarians, and involving students in book selection. Results are encouraging, but much is yet to be done.

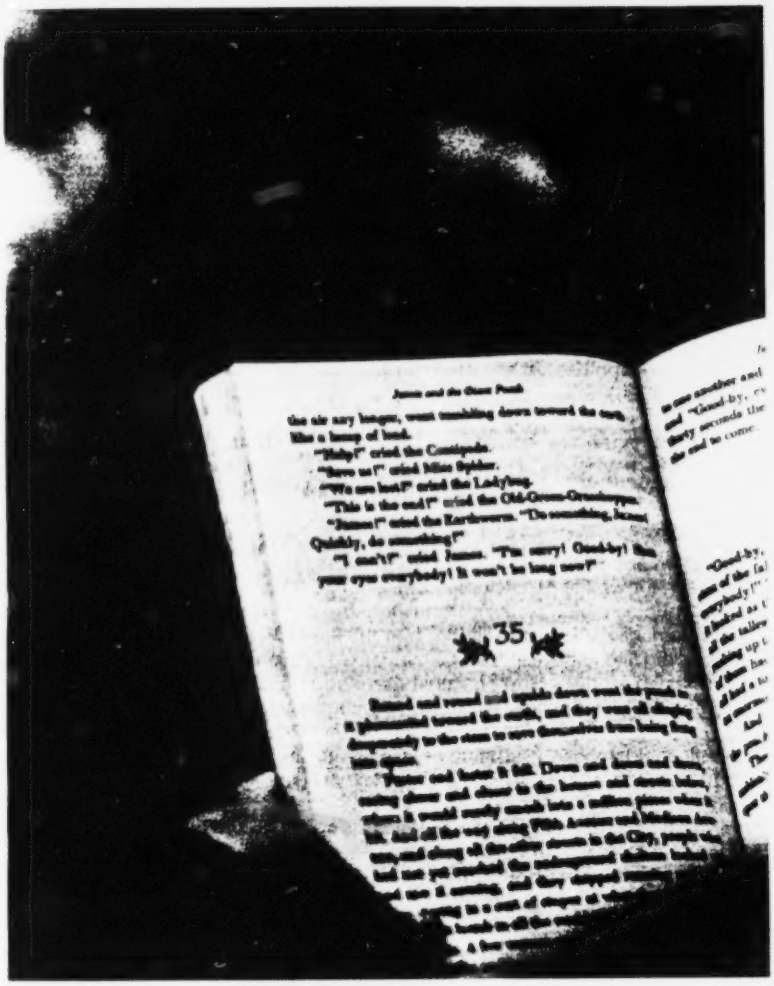
by Dennis E. Hensley

"Ask most librarians, whether in a school or public library, where the literary 'no man's land' is and they'll agree it's in the young-adult section," says Jack W. Humphrey, director of the Middle Grades Reading Network at the University of Evansville.

"Readers ages 10 to 15 are usually a library's lowest priority because of the difficulty in documenting the effectiveness of materials and programs offered to them," says Humphrey. "Story time for very young readers draws visibly large crowds. Circulation of titles for adult books can be recorded. However, measuring the library's use by students in fifth-through-ninth grades is much harder. And since this level of library use can't be measured, most library boards cannot justify spending money on books for young adolescents."

"Reading should not be approached as a curriculum area, but as a life skill."

The result is a dual problem, explains Humphrey. Traditionally, children dedicate less time to reading after they enter the middle grades. They become more intrigued with sports, boyfriends and girlfriends, video games, television, movies and, more recently, computers. Just when a great effort needs to be put forth to maintain their interest in reading, youngsters discover no library programs designed for them and, even worse, very few books on the shelves that appeal to their particular interests.



Who says reading is a solo activity? *Innovative programs around Indiana have included "read-ins" with college basketball stars, visits to nursing homes where students read to elderly residents, and overnight reading "camps."*

To reach this target group of young-adult readers, Lilly Endowment formed a Reader Advisory Board headed by Joan Lipsitz, a program director on the Endowment staff.

Responding to the need

"Our feeling was that reading should not be approached as a curriculum area, but as a life skill," explains Lipsitz. "Rather than focus our attention on remedial reading programs, we instead chose to encourage voluntary and recreational reading. If middle-grades students could be helped to develop a love for reading as a pastime, the benefits would become obvious in other areas, too."

To achieve this goal, a series of programs was developed to meet specific needs, such as making access to books much easier; getting teachers, principals, parents, and school and public librarians to join efforts in encouraging students to read; providing staff development so that librarians would know best how to get students excited about reading, and directly involving students in the selecting, ordering, unpacking and promoting of the new books.

Essential to the accomplish-

ment of these goals was a joining of efforts by the school media specialists and the public librarians. It was assumed that such efforts were already going on to some extent, yet research showed collaboration rarely occurred. To foster a team effort, an innovative program called SOAR — Stimulating Opportunities for Adolescents to Read — was developed.

Soaring high by joining forces

A study conducted by SOAR's project director, Daniel Callison of Indiana University, revealed that, in a large number of Indiana communities, the members of the public-library staff had never met (much less ever worked with) the librarians employed by the public schools. Here were two groups of highly trained professionals who were serving the same youthful readers, yet neither group had any idea what the other was doing to meet the needs of their common constituency.

Too often, the staff of a public library had never met the staff of the school library.

"One of the SOAR program's major purposes was to show public-library and school-library staffs how to join efforts to increase reading enjoyment on the middle-grades level," says Dana Burton, co-facilitator of the SOAR retreats and librarian at the Monroe County Public Library.

"For example, we held a SOAR conference in June 1992 in which 33 communities sent two- or three-person teams made up of a public librarian and a teacher, a principal or librarian from a middle-grades school," says Burton. "These professionals were not paid for their time, but an Endowment grant reimbursed them for their travel, food and lodging."

The 1992 SOAR retreat presented guest speakers, workshop leaders and media specialists who helped participants develop programs designed to promote recreational reading for young adolescents. Brainstorming sessions, resource displays and reading activities were also part of the busy agenda.

These same teams returned in July to a second SOAR retreat to present their plans. Participants were guided through a planning process. Each member received $250 (a group could receive up to $750) to implement the initiatives.

"The results have been impressive," says Burton. "For instance, prior to attending our 1991 SOAR retreat, the librarians from the Michigan City Public Library and the librarians from nearby Knapp Middle School had never worked together. Through SOAR, however, they designed a project to heighten student awareness about the Holocaust."

Using the young-adult book *Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry as a focal point for information about the Holocaust, numerous spinoff programs were developed. Teenagers toured a Jewish temple and visited a Jewish museum in Chicago. Holocaust survivors were invited to the city and school libraries to give talks about their ordeals. Lois Lowry herself came to Michigan City to present an evening reading.

The reading project attracted major coverage in newspapers throughout the state. At the end of the academic year, the Association of Indiana Media Educators presented its coveted 1992 Esther V. Burrin award for "Outstanding School Media Projects" to the Michigan City SOAR team. Many other communities with different but equally fascinating reading programs are reporting similar results.

Meeting rural needs

Although the SOAR project successfully showed school media

Libraries offer students a no-stress environment

"It's a mistake to assume that students will develop a love for recreational reading simply because they are taught reading skills in a classroom," says Susan Rosenzweig. "Libraries are where young adolescents learn to enjoy reading as a pastime."

Rosenzweig worked as a school librarian on the middle-grades and high-school levels before spending eight years at the University of North Carolina's Center for Early Adolescence. Currently, she is an instructor of library science at the University of Rhode Island. She worked with the Indiana Library Federation to develop Opening Doors (see p. 12), a project funded by Lilly Endowment to enhance public-library services to young adolescents.

"People often ask why emphasis needs to be put on the importance of libraries," says Rosenzweig. "They think reading is reading, whether it's done in a classroom or a library. Nothing could be further from the truth. The mission of the classroom reading program is not the same as the mission of the public-library program.

"Classroom reading programs are designed to help students read better, to improve their reading skills. These programs are not designed to motivate students to read more, nor can they provide the breadth of material needed to cover vast ranges of subjects on many levels. Classrooms are too limited for all that."

She adds that classroom teachers are not usually trained in book-evaluation methods. Librarians read and critique books; they organize and categorize books, and they stay current on reviews of new books. As such, both teachers and students turn to librarians for advice on what to read for pleasure and where to turn for information.

"Environment is also crucial in getting students to feel comfortable about reading," Rosenzweig continues. "There are no tests, no grades, no competition in libraries. In school, students are part of a captive audience; coming to the library, however, is something they *choose* to do. Libraries are places where kids can read for fun or discover the kind of information *they* want to learn about. It's motivating, but non-directed."

She points out that young adolescents can develop a personal relationship with a librarian. If a librarian knows that Bob likes nonfiction books about athletes, the librarian can direct him to newly acquired titles and spend time discussing what Bob has read lately. Such attention is almost impossible for a teacher, since he or she has to prepare lessons every day for 125 or more pupils. Librarians can also use storytelling, book-talking or other small-group activities as ways of bonding with adolescent readers.

"Since libraries are the great motivators of recreational reading, it's imperative that we do all we can to ensure that their book collections are current, wide-ranging and interesting," says Rosenzweig. "There's no point in teaching students *how* to read if we don't make available to them *what* they want to read."

— Dennis E. Hensley

specialists and public librarians how to join forces, SOAR's efforts were limited to communities where resources and personnel were adequate. But what about communities that were less fortunate?

Ideally, a library should add 1,000 new books each year for every 500 middle-grades students.

The Endowment profiled 140 school districts in Indiana and homed in on 23 rural districts that had 25 percent of their students on the free/reduced-cost lunch program (or had at least 1,000 students on this program). These rural communities had very few bookstores, and they had only small libraries with limited numbers of books. More than 20 percent of the land mass of Indiana is served by no public library whatsoever.

"A new program called Books for Rural Youth Access provided books, posters, book markers and handbills for media centers in 22 of the 23 school districts," reports Jack Humphrey. "An ideal situation is for a library to add 1,000 new books each year for every 500 students on the middle-grades level (two books per student). Some of these districts were adding fewer than 100 new books per year (one new book for every five students).

Seminars show librarians how to make the library more appealing and how to promote use of the newly acquired books.

"Equally bad, they were retaining their books from the 1940s and 1950s instead of updating their selections. One of our surveys showed that in a school of 850 students, only 125 books had been checked out in a week's time. The library, obviously, had very little to offer the students," Humphrey says.

Books for Rural Youth Access has provided approximately 2,500 new books to these school libraries. The fiction selections are modern paperbacks with special bindings for greater durability. In addition, training seminars for staff development show librarians how to make the library more appealing, how to get parents involved in encouraging student reading, and how to promote use of the newly acquired books and other materials.

During the summer of 1992, *the Monroe County Public Library invited youth to munch pizza and learn about such activities as cryonics, ancient mysteries and the martial arts. Demonstrations hooked participants; books provided details.*

"Of course, adding 2,500 books when thousands are needed is not solving the problem," admits Humphrey, "but every effort helps. And the staff training certainly works to maximize the use of what books are available. It's a positive step."

Reaping the harvest

The REAP program (Reading Excitement and Paperbacks) was conceived in 1989 as a way of providing more access to books by the children in Indiana's less-advantaged school districts.

"We knew that just buying books and putting them on shelves would not make middle-grades students more excited about reading," recalls Jacqueline Morris of the Indiana Department of Education. "We had to come

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up with a way to give the students 'ownership' of the program. So, that's what we did. We got the students and sometimes their parents involved in selecting the books, ordering the books, unpacking the books and even reviewing the books for other students. It was their program ... and they loved it instantly."

For a public school to receive a $6,000 REAP grant, it must have a half-time or full-time media-education specialist on staff. The money is awarded in two stages: During the first year of the REAP program, 400 new books are bought for the school; another 400 books are bought the second year. The total book costs are approximately $5,100. That leaves $900 to use for administrative expenses and for activities for the students (library T-shirt days, reading contests, personal appearances by popular authors).

"Charlotte's Web is a magnificent book, but it's 50 years old."

"We experimented first with grades four through six," says Linda Cornwell, a learning-resource consultant with REAP and a driving force behind the program.

"We contacted book publishers and book distributors for information about the kinds of books adolescent readers enjoy. From this, we put together a collection of 800 prebound books. These were contemporary titles. *Charlotte's Web* is a magnificent book, but it's 50 years old. Young-adult readers are looking for something more up to date." Cornwell loaded a van with the books, drove to one school after another, each time putting the books on display in a large classroom. Students were then asked to come in and, using an evaluation form, select which books they would like to have delivered to their school.

Students were very direct in their evaluations: "Hey, lady, there aren't enough football books here!"

"They were very direct in their evaluations," says Cornwell with a chuckle. "They'd say, 'Hey, lady, there aren't enough football books here' or 'Why don't you have *all* the paperbacks in this series?' or 'Get some Garfield cartoon books.' I would write down everything they told me and, sure enough, I'd go out and find those very books. Then, by the time the order was filled and the first 400 books were delivered to that school, the students were 'primed' to get them. Of course, that was our main objective. We wanted them to be excited about reading."

The REAP program is now active in 15 middle-grades schools. Grants in 1992 have been increased in size over a two-year spread to $7,000 for elementary schools and $14,000 for middle-grades schools. Each elementary and middle-grades school is asked to develop a selection policy for books. If a book is challenged by a parent or teacher because of the language used in the book or because of its subject matter, it is not automatically removed from the school library. Instead, it is evaluated in light of the selection policy.

"The REAP program also sponsors workshops which show teachers how to incorporate literature into the entire middle-grades curriculum," says Cornwell. "Our hidden agenda is to make teachers aware of the new literature that is available so that they can encourage reading. We're succeeding at that, too."

Opening doors to library opportunities

While REAP has been at work in the middle-grades schools, a counterpart program has been active in the public libraries of these same communities. The Opening Doors project was originated in July 1990.

"Our surveys revealed that almost none of the public libraries in the 53 least-advantaged school districts in Indiana had a young-adult librarian," says Ellen Munds, project director of Opening Doors. "Consequently, we developed a multi-faceted program that not only supplied reading materials for this age group, but also provided training for the librarians."

Regional workshops were conducted at South Bend, Indianapolis and Jasper during 1991, and 36 targeted libraries sent staff members for training.

Merging worlds

"I'll admit it," emphasizes Eden Kuhlenschmidt, a media specialist at River Valley Middle School at Jeffersonville, Ind., "I never made an effort to coordinate what I was doing to encourage student reading with what my counterparts at the Jeffersonville Public Library were doing. It was as if we were in different worlds. Fortunately, the SOAR program changed all that."

When Kuhlenschmidt and colleague Kim Swan, a learning-disabilities teacher, heard about the SOAR program, they formed a three-person team with public-librarian Pam Federspiel.

"SOAR gave us an opportunity, away from home and school, to plan for meeting the reading needs of young adolescents," says Kuhlenschmidt. "We developed the program around quarterly themes that involved teachers and students on all levels in every subject. Pam also used the materials at the public library."

The SOAR program provided $500 to the middle school and $250 to the public library for materials (primarily new books), and these funds were matched by the school's parent-teacher organization. The public-library director felt the reading program was important enough to send a different staff member each week to read with the students during silent reading. In addition, Pam assisted in compiling lists of thematic read-aloud titles, says Kuhlenschmidt.

"We changed our program theme every nine weeks," reports Kuhlenschmidt. "One quarter we focused on 'Earth Awareness' and another quarter on the Olympics. Adults gave classroom readings. We held a reading contest and 90 percent of the students took part, and 50 percent earned prizes."

Kuhlenschmidt says the increase in reading and the enjoyment of the programs made school more interesting to both students and teachers.

"One of the lessons I learned," says Kuhlenschmidt, "is how much more effective programs can be when the public libraries and the schools work together. Our joint efforts were especially successful in reaching students with weaker language skills and students who were seldom read to by their parents at home. That sort of progress is beneficial to the entire community."

— Dennis E. Hensley

"In those workshops and others, we showed librarians how to select books that would appeal to young adolescents," says Munds. "We also demonstrated a variety of programs that could be used to attract young-adult readers to the library. We even brought in young-adult authors to address the librarians."

Librarians are tracking the circulation of books recently added to their collections.

Each participating library received $375 to spend on young-adult books. Another $750 was available to any library that developed a reading promotional program or service and filed for a grant. Also provided was a set of professional reference books for librarians — journals, program manuals, and bibliographies.

"The first year was so successful that we held a statewide workshop in May 1992," explains Munds. "One of our guest speakers was author Marilyn Kaye, who spoke on 'Trash or Treasure: The Evolution of Series Books in America.' Everyone who attended the session received valuable information."

To focus the 1992 summer reading theme of "The World Is an Open Book" more directly on middle-grades students, Opening Doors provided participating libraries with posters, bookmarks, clip art, program manuals, reading-record charts ... and even sets of chopsticks.

Success was evident when students chose books rather than pizza parties as incentives.

"Whatever it takes to stimulate recreational reading, we'll try it," says Munds.

Whenever one library's promotional effort *is* successful, its program information is forwarded to the Indiana Library Federation (ILF), where it is added to a compilation of such programs now being readied for publication and distribution. Librarians also are tracking the circulation of the specific books added to their shelves for middle-grades readers, and they are sharing the data with the ILF.

"Until now, very little hard data have been available to analyze how, when and why young adolescents in Indiana use public-library facilities and services," says Munds. "We're hopeful Opening Doors will help provide such data and, in the process, improve the way libraries allot funds for middle-grades readers."

At the SOAR summer retreat *educators and librarians participated in storytelling, round robins and a reader's theater demonstration.*

Hold the pizza, bring the books

And just how well is the combination of all four programs — SOAR, REAP, Opening Doors and Books for Rural Youth Access — working? Joan Lipsitz provides a candid perspective. "If you are a librarian who sees use of the library by young adolescents jump from 10 percent of the student body to 50 percent, you will say the program is an overwhelming success," she observes.

"However, if you sit in my chair and read the field reports, you realize that even if 50 percent of all students in the district *are* using the library, there's still another 50 percent who aren't. And that bothers me. I think the programs are initially successful, but we still have a lot of work ahead of us."

Linda Cornwell, however, is optimistic about the momentum that SOAR, REAP, Opening Doors and Books for Rural Youth Access is showing.

Says Cornwell: "I recently talked with a middle-grades librarian who told me she wasn't offering pizza parties as incentives to readers any longer. The students told her they'd much rather have books as prizes. To me, that's real progress!" ■

About the author

Dennis E. Hensley *received an "Award of Teaching Excellence" from Indiana University in 1990. He is based at Fort Wayne, Ind., and is the author of 26 books.*

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MODEL BEHAVIOR

Parents, communities reinforce reading efforts

Schools and libraries cannot assure that middle-grades students will develop effective reading skills and an appreciation for the personal pleasures and practical benefits of reading. The larger community, as well as youth-serving agencies, must join in the effort to raise awareness of the wonder of books and to promote reading among today's youth. Most important of all, parents must be role models and advocates for reading in their children's lives.

by Mary W. Atteberry

Schools and libraries take the lead in getting children to read, but they don't operate in a vacuum. Increasingly, they look to parents and other adults in their communities to reinforce these efforts.

At Anderson, Ind., the three urban middle-grades schools team with the public-library system and local restaurants to hook kids on books. In one successful program, Read and Feed, 35 to 40 youth read a different novel each month and discuss it over a free lunch provided by various area restaurants. And teachers and librarians urge parents to share books with their young teens.

In one program, youth read a novel a month and discuss it over a free lunch.

This automotive-manufacturing city of 60,000, says Middle Grades Reading Network Director Jack W. Humphrey, is an example of a town in which efforts to stimulate reading among children ages 10 to 15 are moving beyond the schoolhouse and into homes and the community. This kind of effort is needed if progress is to be made in turning youth into lifelong readers.

Schools, the primary literacy provider, can and should accomplish a good deal, but they can't do it all, explains Humphrey. And students do not spend all their time in school.

In a 1992 report prepared for the Indiana Youth Institute and funded by the Endowment, Humphrey noted that, throughout Indiana, little cooperative programming exists between public libraries and schools, even though the public libraries could greatly enhance the school libraries' limited resources (see article, p. 9).

***Book purchases by school librarians** may have declined, but book purchases by families have increased nationwide. Parents are teaching youth the value of reading books and applying the knowledge that is contained in books.*

Wanted: linkages

Few schools help parents in the challenging task of getting their children to read, even though there are several national models for encouraging parental involvement. Further, schools do not have cooperative arrangements with youth-serving agencies within their communities. Linkages between schools and such community organizations could advance youth literacy significantly.

"Community youth agencies should emphasize reading activities; businesses and other organizations should offer reader-incentive programs," writes Humphrey in the report, *A Study of Reading in Indiana Middle, Junior and Senior High Schools*.

Robin A.G. Pulver, director of the Youth Literacy Initiative at the Center for Early Adolescence, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, comments that the

literate environment that exists outside of school — in the home and in the community — must be cultivated. "If everyone joins in telling young people that literacy is important, the message will make an impact," she says.

A publicity blitz got the word out that reading can be as entertaining as going to the movies.

Recognizing the value of cooperative efforts, the Endowment has supported several programs that attempt to involve parents and youth-serving community agencies in the literacy effort. Success in this area is hard to measure, but these programs have at least raised public awareness — an important step toward increasing involvement.

Raising awareness

At Anderson, classroom posters depicting Indiana youth captivated by books are vestiges of a statewide public-relations blitz funded by the Endowment in 1990-91 through a grant to the Indiana Youth Institute. The purpose was to get the word out to youth that reading at home can be as entertaining as going to the movies. Each public-service announcement, billboard, poster and calendar featured an Indiana middle-grades student with a book that sprang to life through imagination. The slogan in each ad reiterated: "Only reading makes it real."

"Community-based agencies do a lot of literacy work but don't necessarily call it literacy."

Howard R. Mitchell III, vice president of public relations at Keller-Crescent Co., an advertising and public-relations firm at Evansville which developed the public-service announcements (PSAs), says the Indiana Youth Institute decided not to use celebrities to reach its audience; the Institute felt that young people ages 10 to 15 might be more likely to listen to their peers.

In 1990, middle-grades schools across the state sent young adolescents to casting sessions at Michigan City, Fort Wayne, Indianapolis, Evansville and New Albany. Ten youngsters were selected to participate in two television PSAs, three radio PSAs, three outdoor billboards, one poster and one calendar; all products would be reproduced for statewide circulation. In 1991, Keller-Crescent developed another PSA for television, two more for radio, and printed another batch of calendars.

More than $250,000 worth of outdoor-board space was donated in the first year and more than $300,000 in 1991. One radio station alone — WTHI in Terre Haute — contributed more than $19,000 worth of air time, Mitchell says.

Although no one knows how many reading habits were changed, news coverage about the campaign reached 7.7 million people in 1990 and another 5 million the following year, according to Mitchell.

Humphrey believes the most ingenious aspect of the campaign was the casting of youngsters to influence their peers. Vickie L. Thomas, a media specialist at South Side Middle School at Anderson, agrees. Students at her school were impressed by seeing Indiana youth such as UnHui Nam of Indianapolis, Andy Hobson of New Albany, and Tiffany Spencer of Evansville looking out from posters and calendars. These materials were hung in Anderson classrooms and libraries, and tapes of the PSAs were played for the students. A dozen billboards around town reinforced the message during the campaign's two years.

Building Youth Literacy

In addition to the marketing campaign, which took a broad-brush approach to reading, the Endowment has taken more-intensive routes to reach parents and others in the community. One is Building Youth Literacy, a program to teach youth-serving community agencies ways they can use their programming to encourage kids to read for pleasure and information.

Building Youth Literacy was developed by the Center for Early Adolescence, which trained 28 Indiana community youth leaders in the fall of 1991 and recently published a manual to teach additional youth leaders — scoutmasters, youth ministers, Girls and Boys Clubs officials — how they can boost reading skills within their constituencies.

"Community-based agencies do a lot of literacy work but don't necessarily call it *literacy*," explains Pulver. Many agencies could increase these kinds of opportunities for kids to read and write in ways that are non-threatening, she says.

Gail Thomas Strong, director of leadership education for the Indiana Youth Institute, points out that a parent whose child is having trouble reading may feel uncomfortable talking to teachers, but may be willing to ask for help from a 4-H leader or youth minister. These leaders are in an excellent position to help through activities that tap into the interests of the young people.

Phyllis N. Kincaid, executive director of Youth Resources of Southwestern Indiana, says the training made her realize that incorporating reading and writing into her youth projects didn't have to be a major undertaking. "It can be just a little thing. It can be designing posters or it can be writing plays and skits. It can take a lot of different avenues."

Kincaid's organization funds community-service projects that are planned and implemented by youth ages 10 to 19. As a result of her literacy training, Kincaid says, she now encourages them to include a reading component in all projects. Already she's seeing results. This year, young people working with a residential group home for girls put together a simple cookbook for residents with poor reading skills.

Sharon Hampton, a caseworker for Big Brothers of Greater Indianapolis, says she now urges all 34 Big Brothers she supervises to assess their Little Brothers' reading abilities and to engage them in reading and writing. "If they are doing any activity that involves reading or writing, I ask them to have their Little Brother do it."

The training, far from giving Hampton a new approach, made her more aware of how she could enhance the Little Brothers' reading skills. "In anything they [Big Brothers] do, they can make literacy a part of their program."

One of the Big Brothers now spends an hour each week reading

...of the middle-grades years: ...ts and books.

schoolbooks with his Little Brother, Hampton says. "The Big Brother may read a page, then the Little Brother reads a page. They alternate. They've seen a lot of improvement [in the Little Brother's ability to read]."

Despite such efforts from persons who have received training, Strong has been frustrated in her attempts to organize training sessions for others who did not attend the 1991 seminar for youth leaders. From feedback she's received, she believes many members of the community still view reading and writing as responsibilities of the schools.

Parents Sharing Books

That attitude may be one reason that middle-grades schools have had mixed results with another program that tries to get parents to read books with their children. Parents Sharing Books was launched by the Family Literacy Center at Indiana University in 1990 with a three-year grant from the Endowment.

The idea was to provide a bookshelf of 25 preselected books from a variety of reading levels and subjects — fiction and nonfiction, classical and contemporary. Each school would get two copies of each book so that parents and children could read them simultaneously and then return to school for evening discussion meetings. Teachers and parents were enthusiastic at first, but high hopes were dashed by poor parent turnout at many of the 73 participating schools.

Staff at Rockville Junior High School speculate that the low numbers of parents in the program reflect the low value parents place on reading, and a further belief that education is not their job. But teachers at Barker Junior High School at Michigan City wondered if the parents' poor participation also had to do with students not wanting their parents to be involved with them in school. In the middle grades, youngsters begin to assert their independence from parents.

None of these explanations seems to be the case at Thompkins Middle School at Evansville, however, where 30 enthusiastic parents participated during the first two years. "The parents were very pleased with the program," says teacher Carolyn Yeager. "The kids enjoyed it because they got to pick the books (from the list of 25 selected titles). They got to tell their parents what to read."

The only criticisms came from students who read the books faster than their parents, Yeager said. "Sometimes we let them go on to a second book."

Yeager is not sure why Parents Sharing Books has been so well received at Thompkins, but notes, "We have a strong PTA and strong parental involvement." The program is being offered again this school year.

The Thompkins experience suggests that Parents Sharing Books can be successful in schools that already have a good level of parent involvement, but it probably can't create parent participation where there isn't any.

Mary Ann Wildman, a teacher and reading specialist at North Side Middle School at Anderson, believes "the concept of parental involvement is wonderful and necessary," even though few parents get involved. "To me, the biggest obstacle is getting parents to come to school at night."

Although Parents Sharing Books is not being offered at North Side any more, Wildman says parents are not being overlooked in the effort to strengthen reading habits among middle-grades students. Parents are being asked to lead book discussions and be guest readers at school, in addition to helping with the student-operated bookshop.

Regardless of the program, the important factor is getting parents involved so that children realize reading is not something isolated within school walls. And as this parent and community involvement broadens, these youth will begin to see themselves as part of a larger community of readers. ■

About the author

Mary W. Atteberry *is a former reporter and assistant city editor for* The Indianapolis Star. *She is now a free-lance writer and book reviewer at Indianapolis.*

Recommended reading

In the past five years, several excellent books, manuals and monographs have explored the topic of reading as it pertains to middle-grades students. Listed below is a sample of research supported by Lilly Endowment that is currently available.

Braught, Loran R. *The Student's Own Bookshop Network Manual.* Terre Haute: Indiana State University Press, 1992.

Cardarelli, Aldo L. *Teachers Under Cover.* Evansville: University of Southern Indiana, 1992.

Davidson, Judith and David Koppenhaver. *Adolescent Literacy: What Works and Why.* New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1988.

Humphrey, Jack W. *A Study of Reading in Indiana Middle, Junior, and Senior High Schools.* Indianapolis: Indiana Youth Institute, 1992.

Simic, Marjorie. *Parents Sharing Books: A Parent Outreach Program for Indiana Middle/Junior High Schools, Annual Report.* Bloomington: Indiana University, Family Literacy Center, 1992.

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The next step: Middle Grades Reading Network

"Who taught you to read, Matilda?"

"I just sort of taught myself, Miss Honey."

"And have you read any books all by yourself, any children's books, I mean?"

"I've read all the ones that are in the public library in the High Street, Miss Honey."

"And did you like them?"

"I liked some of them very much indeed, but I thought others were fairly dull."

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by Jack W. Williams

Nurturing a community of discriminating young readers, like the precocious little girl in the juvenile novel *Matilda* by Roald Dahl, is the goal of the Middle Grades Reading Network.

During the past three years the Middle Grades Reading Program has raised interest and participation statewide in adolescent reading activities by offering innovative, hands-on projects for middle-grades schools. The Middle Grades Reading Network, the next step in the Endowment's reading-improvement effort, is designed to build on that success.

Housed at the University of Evansville, which administers funding and provides facilities and support staff for participants, the Middle Grades Reading Network now intends to bring together the leadership of the programs, as well as others who have a stake in the improved literacy of young Hoosiers. "The programs have made carrying a book a status symbol," says Joan Lipsitz, program director at the Endowment. "I suppose we could walk away and be proud."

Instead, according to Lipsitz, the newest thrust seeks to sustain the efforts of earlier projects while continuing to build an infrastructure of reading supports in Indiana communities. The ultimate goal of the Reading Network is to widen the circle of interest in reading around a growing circle of young readers — like Matilda.

Identifying four objectives

The Network initiative is driven by four main objectives: to create "communities of readers" demonstration sites; to provide minigrants to schools so they can focus on an individual school's needs; to develop a group of statewide stakeholders to help influence support for reading programs, and to document — for the purpose of dissemination — the knowledge gleaned from the task of building communities of readers.

"In many ways, the Network phase lets the schools determine the future direction of the reading initiative," says Jack Humphrey, the Network's director.

To meet the first objective, the Network by May 1993 will identify six Indiana communities where parents, teachers, principals, librarians, members of youth-serving agencies and other community organizations demonstrate the most promise of being a model reading community. With the assistance of a consultant, each of the six sites will develop a two-year action plan to pool the resources of both schools and communities and to strengthen links already established by the Middle Grades Reading Program.

Individuals will be encouraged to play what may be new roles in such a community. The Network, for example, will promote linkages by reiterating to parents the importance of being "model readers" for their children, while showing school and public librarians how libraries can become lively centers for reading instead of passive facilities. In its attempt to make books as indispensable to Indiana youngsters as skateboards and basketballs, the Network also hopes to extend the culture of reading into shopping malls, playgrounds and other youth gathering places.

"We hope the Network will connect the various reading-improvement efforts described in this issue of *Progressions* magazine, harnessing the energies of many individual projects into a larger, more-cohesive campaign," says Lipsitz. "It will be the Network's job to conceptualize what a 'community of readers' will look like and what attributes it must have to spur literacy among Indiana's young adolescents."

As in the first stage of the Middle Grades Reading Program, the Network is conducting a minigrant program to fund projects that appear most successfully to forge links among educators, librarians, youth-service professionals and others within the community. Of particular interest are projects that actively seek to involve readers who are most at risk of failure in reading.

Inviting schools to compete

Targeting Indiana's school districts that serve the largest concentrations of young people living in poverty, the Network is inviting 140 select middle-grades schools to compete for 20 available minigrants.

While previous Endowment reading programs have enhanced the efforts of those who work at the grass-roots level — schoolteachers, staff, librarians and parents — the Network has as one of its objectives the identification of a stakeholders group. Various task forces will seek out and mobilize individuals such as legislators, business chief executive officers, leaders of teaching organizations, school superintendents and others whose decisions can influence reading policy and allocation of educational funding at state and local levels.

Director Humphrey believes that the impact of this coalition of 70 advocates will make a difference in the way the state supports its young readers.

"In this phase we are not buying books for schools or libraries," notes Humphrey, contrasting the Network's goals to those of the Middle Grades Reading Program. "Instead, we now want to create 'conditions' for buying books for libraries."

Finally, certain participants will document lessons learned from establishing model reading sites, linking the important parties in such communities, and energizing stakeholders. This information will serve as a resource for potential "communities of readers." A newsletter will offer timely information on the activities of the Network while connecting participants of earlier reading programs, members of reading community demonstration sites, recipients of minigrants, stakeholders and other constituencies. A practitioner's journal will provide a more in-depth look at the successful reading practices that schools and individuals are discovering as they promote reading in their communities.

To keep the Network expanding and to develop a long-term strategy of interventions for the neediest of Indiana's up-and-coming readers, the Network's advisory board, composed of state and national educators, has written a comprehensive multi-year strategy to guide future efforts of the Network.

All initiatives share a common goal: to nurture a wide community of adolescent readers in Indiana.

About the author

Jack W. Williams *is director of publications at Anderson University, Anderson, Ind., and editor of* Signatures, *the university's alumni magazine.*

Reflections: Lessons of a grantmaker

In *Small Can Be Effective*, an occasional paper written for the Council on Foundations, the late Paul Ylvisaker commented, "It is the Council's fundamental belief that the *creative* use of foundation moneys rather than their size and scale constitutes the real potential of philanthropy."

It may seem peculiar that a commentary about Lilly Endowment's $5 million reading initiatives begins with an excerpt from *Small Can Be Effective*. Like that monograph, however, this issue of *Progressions* appeals not for financial largesse, but for *creativity* — even *playfulness* — in grantmaking, especially in territory as ordinary but essential as reading.

When I moved to Indiana in 1986, I visited dozens of middle-level schools across the state. I walked through their libraries, glancing at the collections, opening books to see when they were last checked out, and noticing if students were engrossed in reading. What I saw was depressing. The collections were aging, and few books called out, "Read me!" Circulation was low. Few students had selected the library for the comfortable, even cozy, pursuit of books. Almost always, the more financially disadvantaged the students, the more dismal the book collection.

Such are the meager beginnings of an ambitious grants program: As evidence of need built during my visits, I began devising a "simple" solution. We would just buy books for kids.

But having books on shelves is not enough to ensure students' access to books. I asked myself: What do we know about reading during the early adolescent years?

- We know that students are more likely to read if they have the opportunity to read — a simple observation that can lead to rescheduling problems for school administrators.
- We know that students are more likely to read if librarians and teachers know about books written specifically for an age group — a fact that leads to staff-development demands.
- We know that students are likely to read if they can select books that appeal to them — a potential nightmare for librarians who choose books not by their covers, but from lists.
- We know that reading improvement is most ensured when parents are involved in their children's reading — a research finding that schools feel powerless to control.
- We know that students who use libraries retain reading power during the summer better than students who don't.

A simple "access to books" grants program suddenly threatened to become an administrative monster. The Endowment turned to a group of advisers for ideas. This panel helped shape Reading Excitement and Paperbacks (REAP), the initial grant that emphasized student, teacher and parent participation in building school book collections. That experience — marked by students rummaging through books delivered to them in vans, parents chaperoning overnight read-ins, and increases in library circulation rates — spurred us to build on the burst of energy.

With an advisory panel, Jack Humphrey — lent to us at the time by Indiana's Evansville-Vanderburgh School Corp. — "planted" seedlings of programs as Johnny Appleseed planted trees.

The projects' titles suggest how to engage young people in reading: Opening Doors; Student-Operated Paperback Bookshops; Teachers Under Cover; SOAR; Reading, Thinking and Caring. The movement that is now emerging in Indiana is joyful, not somber; humanistic, not mechanical. It has to do with teaching and learning the most fundamental of skills. But it also has to do with valuing books and reading.

This welcome event has led us to extract lessons to guide us and — we hope — fellow grantmakers and others who may find them helpful. These lessons include:

- First, engage the expertise of people who are passionate about reading (or whatever the area of concern). That will save countless missteps and help guide funds.
- Second, building a constituency for this kind of grantmaking program is easy, once people hear their ideas are welcome.
- Third, once the "seedlings" are planted, they need consistent, personalized nurturing if they are to thrive.
- Fourth, spending time and money to connect constituencies of the various programs — through meetings and cross-site visits — compounds the value of initial funding.
- Fifth, once a program becomes part of a school's "dailiness," people in the school continue to nurture it.
- Sixth, and specifically for grantmakers, reading presents a broad and complex area of need. It is essential to establish boundaries for grants programs. Do you want to choose a narrow strategy and try to address a large geographic area with your resources? Or do you prefer to pick a small service area and attempt to saturate it with cross-jurisdictional programs? Such questions should be posed at the outset.
- Seventh, and hardest for foundations, a program of *interrelated* grants takes more than expertise and money. It takes commitment of staff, grantee and consultant time *across years*.
- Eighth, sculpting an evaluation design requires collaboration among researchers, grants officers and community representatives — not as hard a task as we anticipated.
- Ninth, small *can* be effective. Not everyone can grow a forest. Imaginations flourish in well-tended gardens.
- Tenth, get on with the planting, or nothing will grow.

Joan Lipsitz
Program Director

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